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ABSTRACT

The position paper of the New York State School Boards Association covers concerns of identification of the gifted and talented, program development, program evaluation, teacher qualifications, community and parental involvement, and legislation. Twenty-one recommendations are made and include the following: The definition of giftedness should be consistent with the school board's goals for education of the gifted/talented; School districts should have specific, written procedures for screening, assessment, and referral that are consistent yet flexible; The State Education Department should conduct a survey of identification procedures and instruments used in the state; Combinations of mainstreamed instructional opportunities and pull-out programs should be explored; Each component of the gifted/talented program should have clearly stated objectives, with differentiated learning experiences that are consistent with the district-wide plan; Enrichment programs should include inservice training for regular classroom teachers; Teachers, administrators, and support personnel should be involved in the program evaluation development process; School districts should encourage projects that involve links with the community; Additional legislative funding should be sought for new programs or expansion of existing programs. A 29-item bibliography is provided. (DB)

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New York State School Boards Association

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Education for the Gifted and Talented

A Position Paper of the
New York State
School Boards Association

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Summary of Recommendations

1. To fulfill democratic ideals for individual achievement, policymakers should explore a broader educational definition of giftedness and talent that recognizes exceptional ability and potential throughout the student population, and heightens the responsiveness of the comprehensive curriculum.
2. Schools must develop programs that allow students to discover their own talents. These programs should provide a continuum of learning experiences, with opportunities for special gifts and talents to emerge and grow.
3. The identification of gifted and talented students should be an ongoing process, capable of accommodating the individual differences of students and their talents, and sensitive to the stages of personal development at which they may appear.
4. The definition of giftedness that a school board adopts should be consistent with the goals for education of the gifted and talented that are expressed in district policy.
5. School districts should have specific, written procedures for screening, assessment, and referral that are consistent yet flexible enough to fairly assess diverse talents in special populations.
6. The State Education Department should conduct a survey of identification procedures and instruments used in districts.
7. Opportunities must be created to bring students of all levels of ability together in learning, but allow individual gifts and talents to surface. Combinations of mainstreamed instructional opportunities and pull-out programs should be explored. Acceleration should not be regarded as a sufficient response to the needs of gifted and talented students.
8. School districts should recognize the positive impact a well-coordinated program for the gifted and talented can have on the total district program. Also, school districts should assess periodically how their gifted and talented students are served and where gaps exist in the program.
9. Each component of the gifted and talented program should have clearly stated objectives, with differentiated learning experiences that are consistent with the district-wide plan.
10. Enrichment programs should include inservice training for regular classroom teachers, to ensure effective accomplishment of the goals of the enrichment activities.
11. Schools must recognize the support service needs of the gifted and talented. Guidance counselors and other members of the pupil services team should be trained to deal with all aspects of a gifted student's needs—academic, vocational and remedial—and should know how to make referrals to outside agencies, when necessary.

12. Procedures for removal of a child from a program for the gifted and talented should be worked into the overall program policies and guidelines, and should involve support personnel, where appropriate.
13. Teachers, administrators, and support personnel should be involved in the program evaluation development process.
14. Teachers with expertise in the area of gifted and talented education should be utilized as coordinators of enrichment and pull-out activities and, as inservice providers, to help classroom teachers deal more effectively with the gifted and talented in their classes.
15. Specific certification for teachers of the gifted and talented is unnecessary. Rather, solid undergraduate programs in basic teacher competencies, induction and inservice education opportunities specific to gifted education, and collaborative efforts between institutions of higher learning and school districts can prepare teachers to respond confidently to the needs of gifted children.
16. Coordinators for gifted and talented education associated with boards of cooperative educational services and large city school districts should be recognized to a greater extent than they are as a resource for inservice education opportunities.
17. School districts should encourage projects that involve links with the community. Community support of a program for the gifted and talented is essential and should be actively sought.
18. Districts should recognize parental choice in the placement of a child with special gifts and talents. Special programs for parents should be developed to describe fully options and objectives.
19. Students should have access to activities such as summer enrichment programs, extracurricular activities, and electives that provide a testing ground for talents.
20. Additional legislative funding should be sought for new programs or expansion of existing programs. Districts also should be permitted to develop planning grants locally that feature shared programming and combinations of local and regional arrangements. Funds also should be made available for technical assistance to districts, continued research, data collection on programs, and screening procedures for the gifted and talented.
21. The Gifted Education Training System (GETS), which links BOCES and city coordinators to provide training and assistance to districts, should be recognized and funded as an official network for information dissemination purposes. Where no coordinator of gifted and talented education exists, a staff member should be designated, to assure statewide coverage and communication.

Introduction

Alexis de Toqueville, observing American society in the 1830s, noted what he called "a contradiction between the principle of freedom and the principle of equality."[1] One hundred thirty years later, John W. Gardner wrote, "No democracy can give itself over to extreme emphasis on individual performance and still remain a democracy—or to extreme egalitarianism and still retain its vitality."[2] These observations, separated by time but united in insight, clarify the conflict of values that has characterized the history of education in the United States.

This values conflict comes into sharp focus when discussing education of the gifted and talented. Some insist it is undemocratic to treat those who are called gifted any differently from other children in that all children possess special gifts. In contrast, others insist that schooling must enable each child to fulfill his or her potential, and that to do so requires singling out children and designing special programs tailored to their special gifts.[3] Popular literature and folklore tell of those with special gifts and talents who rose above disadvantaged beginnings "by their bootstraps." Formal education designed for the gifted and talented often is criticized because it caters to those who start with more advantages, contrary to the American bootstrap ideal.

Can education of the gifted and talented achieve and maintain the balance Gardner suggests for all democratic institutions concerned about excellence? Or is the pursuit of individual accomplishment a threat to egalitarian principles, and the allocation of resources for the gifted and talented a deprivation of other educational areas?

Programs that respond to students' special gifts and talents provide a piece of the traditional democratic invitation to achieve one's full potential. Furthermore, these programs actually can enrich the comprehensive educational program for all students. Thus, it is useful to see educational offerings as providing a continuum of services that complement, rather than compete, with each other. As educator John Dewey argued in *The School and Society* in 1899, the community must want for its children what the best and wisest of parents want for their children and, as such, must provide the tools and educational experiences that will enable all children to strive.[4]

Reconciling gifted and talented education with views on equality has been complicated by the misconception that giftedness equates with intellectual or academic ability exclusively. Lewis Terman, in 1916, adapted an instrument to measure intelligence, developed originally by Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon.

The use of the Stanford-Binet Individual Test for Intelligence and other subsequently developed tests and instruments encouraged a vari-

ety of programs designed for individualized instruction and special schools. The overemphasis on this type of test led to an interpretation of giftedness and talent as academic or intellectual superiority exclusively, a tendency that sometimes generated concerns about potential elitism.

In 1981, the New York State School Boards Association issued a position statement on educating the gifted and talented. The paper explained why school programs for these students had been developed slowly and often reluctantly. Reasons included a lack of consensus on definitions and educational strategies, and an absence of systematic plans stemming from shortages of funding and specially trained staff.

The Association advocated increased financial incentives for local initiatives, more state technical assistance, inservice education for teachers and administrators, awareness programs for parents, state encouraged identification of exemplary programs, and local sharing of planning and evaluation models.

This agenda has produced promising results. State funding has increased. Local flexibility in use of resources has been maintained for gifted and talented programs. A broad state framework for education of gifted and talented students was written into law in 1982. Numbers of programs have steadily increased. New York State students continue to be recognized nationally for academic, artistic, and vocational accomplishments.

Still, much remains to be accomplished and understood. Data on students who may be considered gifted or talented are inconclusive, and shed little light on their educational needs. The gifted and talented can be found throughout the population, including students with handicapping conditions, dropouts, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Policymakers should explore a broader educational definition of giftedness and talent, one that recognizes all kinds of exceptional ability and potential, from artistic to mechanical and from athletic to poetic; that heightens the responsiveness of the comprehensive curriculum; and that fairly serves all those whose talents may be obscured by societal or physical factors. The effort to address the needs of the gifted and talented can mean better opportunities for all students, and more attention to the special qualities and potential of each.

Identification of the Gifted and Talented

Education, according to its Latin meaning, is that process by which we "lead out" of students the best that they have to offer. To accomplish this, schools must develop programs that allow students to discover their own propensities. A continuum of learning experiences at all levels of competency, one that provides opportunities for special gifts and talents to emerge and grow, is essential. It follows that the identification process should be ongoing, capable of accommodating the individual differences of students and their talents as they surface at various stages of personal development.

Defining Giftedness and Talent

One factor that complicates identification of the gifted and talented is the ambiguity of its definition. Three well-recognized, but somewhat different definitions are, the United States Office of Education (U.S.O.E.) definition (Marland, 1982), the Renzulli three-ring model, and the Taylor multiple-talent totem pole.

The U.S.O.E. definition sets the statutory and regulatory foundation for state funding of such programs in New York. It defines the gifted as:

> Pupils who show evidence of high performance capability and exceptional potential in areas such as general intellectual ability, special academic aptitude, and outstanding ability in visual and performing arts. Such definition shall include those pupils who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their full potential.[5]

The definition also includes a delineation of the areas of potential or demonstrated abilities. These are general intelligence, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership, visual or performing arts, and psychomotor abilities.

The appeal of this definition as a springboard for legislation lies in its recognition of talents other than the intellectual and of the need to extend the continuum of educational experiences. Through emphasis on potential or demonstrated skill, it also recognizes a societal obligation to consider students who are underachieving in the regular school program.

The Renzulli three-ring definition and Taylor multiple talent totem lend themselves to more specific program application. Renzulli's conception defines gifted students as those who possess three critical traits: high creativity, above-average intelligence, and strong task commitment and motivation.[6] Calvin Taylor's multiple-talent totem pole assumes that everyone has special gifts and that each child's gifts should be viewed as a composite of six abilities: academic, creative, planning, communicating, forecasting, and decision-making. In this way, strengths and weaknesses can be analyzed to encourage individualized program direction.[7]

There are other models and concepts of talent and giftedness; however, their relationship to educational programs is essentially the same. The definition that a local school district adopts should be consistent with the goals for their education as expressed in district policy. Such policy should encourage exploration of research-based models and be consistent with baseline identification standards required by legislative action. Although no single theoretical definition applies to the circumstances of every district, districts should develop appropriate policies to create and strengthen programs as needed.

Identifying Gifted and Talented Students

Procedures for identifying students should reflect the intent of local policy. The identification procedure has three major components: *screening, referral,* and *assessment.* As required by Chapter 53 of the

Laws of 1980, a district must screen students entering the public schools for those who are gifted and those who have handicapping conditions. Beyond this, a district has a great deal of discretion which should be retained to promote a good fit between programs and procedures.

Districts should avoid programs that are driven solely by intelligence quotient tests, such as the Stanford-Binet or Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R). By themselves, these tests do not produce a holistic view of a child's abilities, and they do not have any bearing on talents and gifts other than narrowly defined cognitive ability.

Multiple criteria can be used in a variety of ways. One district may use an individually administered intelligence test for entrance into its academically advanced gifted program, but also consider judgments of parents, teachers and administrators in its final decision.

Another may allow students to rise to the top of a variety of academic, artistic, athletic, vocational, and leadership oriented activities by offering a continuum of educational opportunities including student mentoring, interdisciplinary activities, and community service projects designed, administered, and carried out by students. This type of program involves students of all levels of ability and allows them to explore their own interests and talents in a noncompetitive way, thus setting their own criteria for participation.

To make the most of local discretion, school districts should develop multiple criteria. The advantages are threefold: such criteria can account for a greater variety of gifted areas, apply to a student population that draws from different socioeconomic circumstances, and provide for greater accountability to the community. Screening procedures should be consistent and defensible to curb dissatisfaction among those not chosen. At the same time, districts should pay attention to giftedness in special populations and adjust screening instruments that are necessary to fairly assess giftedness.

School districts also should have specific written procedures for referral and assessment processes. Again, districts have a great deal of latitude and may refer students for in-depth assessment as a result of the screening procedures required; request of a parent, teacher, or administrator; or through other locally-established means. The latter two open the door to identification of students who are not first time students.

Ideally, the identification process should be able to draw on the best measures available in order to assess a pupil's potential as accurately as possible. It should begin in kindergarten and remain a continuous process allowing for talents that emerge at different stages of the child's development. Some procedures that have been implemented successfully in many districts include use of:

1) a selection team that understands the program and giftedness;
2) a mechanism to allow flexibility, bearing in mind that test score cutoff points do not reflect significant differences in ability between those just below or above the cutoff;
3) aggregate data on the characteristics of those selected. This will give the district a clear picture of how fair the process is to the student population, and assist staff in determining when and how often students should be reassessed.

Districts should consider the philosophy that educators should find the one talent in every child that will contribute to her/his positive self-esteem and disposition toward learning. However, districts also must be cautious about premature identification of special talents.

A study (1985) at the University of Chicago, directed by Dr. Benjamin Bloom, examined the histories and development of 120 top achievers in their fields. It found the individuals' gifts or innate abilities were translated into specific competencies or talents over time. The research team believed also that "only a small percentage (10 percent or less) of these talented individuals had progressed far enough

by age 11 or 12 for anyone to make confident predictions that they would be among the top . . . in the talent field. . . ."[8]

The implication is that early labeling of student abilities may inhibit inadvertently or miss some talents. Children may be excluded from programs that can channel their talents and energies in new ways. In the same way, children who may mature at different rates can be cut off from programs for which they are suited. It is essential that opportunities exist not only to bring students of all abilities together in learning, but to allow special gifts and talents to surface and grow.

In addition to local efforts, the state should conduct a survey of identification procedures and instruments currently used in districts. This would enable policymakers to have a clear picture gifted and talented education and equity in program participation.

Program Development

A primary goal of educational program development is to provide programs that will evoke an enthusiastic learning response from students and challenge their individual talents and capabilities. If the continuum of learning experiences is extended for those with special talents, the program for all students will benefit from the techniques, activity models, and teaching principles associated with that extension. For example, a district might infuse the critical thinking skills program developed by the teacher of the gifted and talented program into all fourth grade classes. Using this approach, it is easy to recognize the positive impact of a well-coordinated program for the gifted and talented on the total district program.

School district latitude in planning, reinforced with more sophisticated screening procedures and additional technical and financial support at the state and federal levels, should be recognized as the best route toward growth of gifted and talented programs. School districts already have in place many types of programs that are tailored to the needs of their particular communities and student population.

The breadth of giftedness demands program variety. School districts should begin by assessing how gifted students are served and where gaps exist. As with any program development process, content, time and space requirements, and staffing should be addressed as major concerns, along with methods to integrate the program with the overall school program. Combinations of mainstreamed instruction for the gifted and talented and pull-out programs should be explored as well.

The Gifted Learner and Differentiated Curriculum

Intellectual ability, academic aptitude, talent in the visual or performing arts, technical ability, leadership skill, and psychomotor skill are distinct areas of giftedness and lend themselves to different types of programs.

Differentiation, or the appropriate fit or match between curriculum and able learners, should be the underlying goal of any districtwide policy on gifted education. As with any cohort of students, it is not possible to ascribe certain stereotypical traits to the gifted and talented. However, there are certain behaviors that educators may look for to help develop an appropriate program.

Based on many sources of research and experience, gifted and talented students may, for example, learn more rapidly, display stronger curiosities, possess superior abstract thinking skills and communication skills, have a longer attention span, perceive more unusual relationships, see and create patterns, have more intense interests, be more intellectually playful, be better at recognizing discrepancies, have better retention of information, or display more imagination.[9]

As the multiple-talent totem pole described earlier suggests, every student's strengths are manifested differently. Two students who are particularly creative and have logical planning abilities may display these abilities in mathematical problem-solving, musical composition, or woodworking. It is essential that programs for the gifted and talented, as for all students, allow talents to emerge and express themselves in ways appropriate for the individual.

An illustrative program in one district, under the leadership of the school's art department, provides a creative thinking/non-linear problem-solving experience in applied arts and sciences. The program allows students to use their creative abilities in the artistic, mathematical, or scientific components of each project and serves as a model for interdisciplinary efforts in other departments.

For developing a differentiated curriculum for the intellectually gifted, the National/State Leadership Training Institute on Gifted Education suggests that schools:

- present content that is related to broad issues, themes, or problems;
- integrate multiple disciplines;
- present comprehensive and mutually reinforcing experiences within an area of study;
- allow for in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within an area of study;
- develop independent/self-directed study skills;
- develop productive, complex, abstract, and/or higher level thinking skills;
- focus on open-ended tasks;
- develop research skills and methods;
- integrate basic skills and higher level thinking skills into the curriculum;
- encourage the development of products that challenge existing ideas or produce new concepts;
- encourage the development of products that use new techniques, materials, and forms;
- encourage self-understanding and appreciation of one's own abilities as well as those of others; and
- evaluate student outcomes by using appropriate and specific criteria.[10]

Clearly, these are principles of sound curricular development for all students, underscoring the need for an integrated and comprehensive continuum of educational experiences for those with special ability.

Types of Programs for the Gifted

District programs fall into three major—but not mutually *exclusive*—groups: *acceleration, grouping,* and *enrichment. Acceleration* is any strategy that results in advanced standing or credit. Such may include early admission to kindergarten, grade skipping, advanced placement, or early graduation. Acceleration does not imply a change in subject matter or methods of instruction; it speeds up the educational timetable only.

This frequently used method was advocated by the Board of Regents in their Action Plan requirement that districts accelerate students, if appropriate, beginning in the eighth grade.

Districts using acceleration should consider the impact on overall learning experience. Are there, or should there be, alternatives that would address more adequately the child's giftedness? How will the time gained benefit the student educationally, socially, and emotionally? Is acceleration linked with the rest of the student's program so that there are no gaps in subject/content areas? Schools should not view acceleration as sufficient for a gifted and talented program, but just as one component.

Grouping for instruction provides a variety of organizational structures in which students of like ability can work together. Magnet schools, special classes, tracking, and pull-out programs can accommodate an array of needs in a K to 12 instructional program.

Attendance one day per week in a self-contained classroom at a full-fledged center program is one option. Another might be minicourses to promote identification and involvement of students. Each component that uses grouping should have clearly stated objectives for students and teachers with differentiated learning experiences fitted to a districtwide plan.

Enrichment offers a unique two-tiered opportunity. It can provide learning experiences for those who are identified as gifted *or* it can be infused into all classrooms to stimulate learning for all students, while bringing out special gifts and talents in some.

The research of Sato and Johnson breaks enrichment activities into five main types: activities that utilize higher order thinking skills (analyzing, synthesizing, creating, evaluating); those that include content beyond the prescribed curriculum; those that allow students a voice in content selection; those that work with abstract ideas, theories and concepts; and those that require use of non-traditional/non-grade level resources for successful completion.[11] As this variety suggests, enrichment programs require utmost attention to inservice training of teachers in the regular classroom and coordination between the regular classroom teacher and whoever is in charge of the enrichment program. The learning experience should be directed toward specific goals and can focus on content, process, product, research skills, or any combination thereof. Enrichment models typically are adaptable to both tiers of enrichment activity and share a basic premise that learning and individual attainment are stimulated through use of higher order thinking skills, problem finding and problem solving, and individual learning projects.

Acceleration, grouping, and enrichment are not mutually exclusive. Combinations can serve to run a comprehensive program for the gifted and talented, while still encouraging individual achievement throughout the school system. For the success of any program, however, one must recognize the importance of a support system and special services to help students benefit from the experiences offered.

Support Service Considerations

Life circumstances for the gifted and talented vary as widely as they do for the general school population. A child can work effectively toward his or her potential only if basic physical and emotional needs are met. Accordingly, support services for high achievers should not be neglected in a school district's comprehensive pupil support system.

The gifted present two special challenges in educational and career counseling: multipotentiality and expectations.[12] Multipotentiality suggests talents and abilities may be directed to many content areas. It may be difficult for the child to fully understand and make choices. Likewise, teachers and parents may encourage specialization prematurely in an area where talent seems evident. Guidance counselors and other support personnel must be able to help students, teachers, and parents understand the abilities of a gifted child and the range of academic and career opportunities available.

Expectations can be seen in several ways. A gifted student may have unusually high or low self-expectations, depending on signals from school personnel and parents. Parents may expect great successes on a regular basis or choose to base expectation for their child on family needs or socioeconomic status. Counselors must recognize and help students deal with conflicting expectations that can limit aspirations and personal growth.

For many gifted and talented students, guidance needs do differ from those of other students because they may be ready for self-appraisal and self-direction earlier in their school careers, and they may be subject to greater pressures to succeed and achieve. For other gifted students, guidance or referrals to agencies outside the school may be called for because of remedial needs or family or social pressures that discourage a student's special talents. Counselors and teachers should be trained to deal with all implications of a gifted student's needs.

The guidance counselor, and other pupil support staff, should be aware of links between any scheduled programs for the gifted and talented and the rest of the school program. As a child in a gifted program progresses through the grades, his/her learning and social behaviors should be monitored—as closely as other children's.

How should a child be removed from a program for the gifted? A child's lack of success may be due to insufficient task commitment. Testing that commitment is an integral part of programs based on the Renzulli triad model. Some students simply may not want to be set apart from other students and do not care to participate. Whatever

the circumstances, procedures for having a child leave the program should be worked into overall program policies and guidelines, and should involve support personnel.

One program type employs the Revolving Door model, which automatically allows students to come into and out of special programs. This also serves a broad spectrum of elementary level students, thus giving enough leeway in admissions procedures to assure success. Schools should be able to make a student's transition out of a gifted and talented program as smooth as possible and provide options for re-entry, when appropriate. In this regard, it is important to work with the parents as well as the child.

As for all students, counseling and support services for the gifted and talented should seek self-discovery of interests, abilities, and possibilities. Pupil support service staff should inform school staff *and* parents about the special abilities and problems of the gifted and talented. It should *not* be assumed that such talents eliminate needs for guidance, health, or family counseling.

The pupil services team must connect teachers, counselors, attendance teachers, social workers, and others as needed to promote understanding of students with special gifts and talents including those at risk of dropping out and those with handicapping conditions.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation of gifted and talented programs presents unusual problems. Standardized tests and scores and data they produce are inappropriate for many types of programs. Every gifted student is not gifted in every area and, consequently, will not display the effects of a special program the same way. School staff should examine the goals and objectives of each facet of a comprehensive program for the gifted and talented and determine the most reasonable and appropriate types of evaluation. Teachers, administrators, and support personnel should be involved in such development.

Districts should be alert to signs that current offerings are insufficient. Gifted students may drop out of programs that do not challenge them or address their particular needs, or that prohibit them from participating in other school programs. There also may be a tendency among teachers and administrators to recommend students who are well-behaved and consistent achievers for programs intended for the gifted and talented.

Conversely, students not recommended for programs because of behavior problems or basic skill deficiencies represent a segment of the gifted and talented who are at risk of falling through the cracks. A district should review the selection process to insure that it can compensate for judgments that restrict student access.

Teachers of the Gifted

Whether or not successful teachers of the gifted and talented actually have unique abilities compared to other teachers is debatable. However, taken collectively, they need to exhibit certain skills consistently. Barbara Clark, in *Growing Up Gifted,* identified the following competencies needed for teachers of the gifted:

- Knowledge and understanding of the cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics, needs, and problems found in gifted students as a result of atypical mental development;
- Ability to develop a flexible, individualized, enriching curriculum appropriate to meeting the individual gifted pupil's needs and nurturing group interaction;
- Ability to create an environment where students can use their strengths, explore personal and interpersonal development, risk new areas of thought, and feel challenged;
- Ability to teach gifted learners skills of higher order thinking, integration of mind and body, intuitive development, and self-evaluation;
- Ability to nurture creativity in all aspects of thinking and expressing talent through products;
- Ability to encourage in gifted learners a sense of social awareness and commitment to humanity and the environment, and a respect for the worth and dignity of others; and
- Ability to relate well to colleagues and to parents of gifted learners.[13]

These specific abilities are consistent with what is known about effective teaching in general and can serve as a guide for preservice and inservice teacher education. Similarly, a survey indicated the most important teacher competencies for the education of the gifted were the ability to teach higher order cognitive skills, familiarity with curriculum modification strategies, diagnostic/prescriptive teaching skills, and student counseling skills.[14]

Also, research has shown that a major portion of a gifted student's educational experiences is the responsibility of a regular classroom teacher, whether in a self-contained or departmentalized setting.[15] Together these findings underscore the need for all teachers to be trained to apply basic teacher competencies to the needs of students at all ability levels.

Inservice education programs that focus on the gifted and talented help district staff respond effectively to student needs. Inservice may take the form of summer programs, district-sponsored institutes and conferences, demonstration classes, workshops, or interdistrict centers for teachers responsible for gifted students.

In addition, districts should incorporate into the induction process opportunities for new teachers to learn from colleagues experienced in education of the gifted and talented. Teachers with expertise in this field should act as coordinator of enrichment and pull-out activities, as well as inservice provider to help classroom teachers deal more effectively with the gifted and talented.

Universities and schools of education can prepare teachers to respond confidently to the needs of gifted children. They can do this by building certain teaching competencies in students and follow up with induction and inservice training in gifted education.

Specific certification for teachers of the gifted and talented is unnecessary. However, collaboration between institutions of higher learning and school districts should be strengthened and encouraged to provide experiences that promote deeper understanding of the educational needs of the gifted and adaptation of teaching skills for the gifted and talented. In addition, districts should incorporate strategies for teaching higher order thinking skills and programmatic features of gifted classes into inservice for regular classroom teachers. This approach has proven beneficial for students and teachers.

Administrators must be sensitive to teacher differences and realize that certain teachers will relate better to students with special talents. Assignments to a full-time program for the gifted and talented should be based on this premise.

In addition, coordinators for gifted and talented education associated with boards of cooperative educational services or large city school districts should be valuable resources for inservice education staff. One district program utilizes the BOCES coordinator in its gifted handicapped mentor program (K to 12). The coordinator works with classroom teachers, mentors chosen from the community, and parents to develop an appropriate individualized program for the gifted student with handicapping conditions. Greater infusion of inservice teacher training and cooperative programming should be encouraged in all districts to deal more effectively with special talents and abilities.

Community and Parental Involvement

Home and community links are as important to education of the gifted and talented as they are to general education. There are misconceptions that gifted learners will succeed with little outside help and that parents of gifted children are always supportive. As the public schools confront changing student demography, and as student alienation becomes a major educational concern, it is foolish to make such assumptions about *any* child.

In *Widening Horizons: Using Community Resources in the Education of Gifted Students,* the New York State Education Department recommended steps to tap into community resources: 1) have a written plan to use in discussing a project with potential mentors and community resource people, 2) contact the right person within an organization or business, 3) be flexible enough to make use of community resources when available, 4) develop a written agreement for long-term or complex projects.[16]

Many educational programs can be strengthened by integrating learning experiences in and out of school. In one county, for instance,

It is essential that students with special talents acquire a sense of commitment to the world around them and see their gifts and talents as part of what they have to contribute.

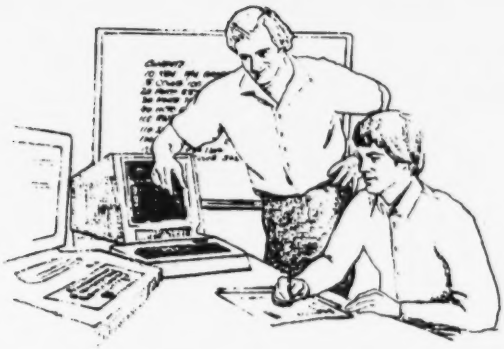
a math/science, school/industry council shows how teachers, students, and personnel from industry can be mutually supportive in a math, science, and technology program in and out of the school setting. The program created a county-wide partnership between industries and schools involving a network of industry and school personnel, mentor relationships and other opportunities for personal growth.

In another district, setting a gifted and talented program in the community brings neighborhood school students in contact with the community's needs and character. Junior high students—working in teams—research, plan, and carry out a community development design on 50 acres of land designated by the town. The program gives students and the community the opportunity to connect, and reduces feelings of isolation that plague many gifted and talented students. Community support for the gifted and talented program is bolstered as well. Districts, in general, should encourage student awareness of opportunities available from community theater groups, musical ensembles, and other specialized interest activities.

It is essential that students with special talents acquire a sense of commitment to the world around them and see their gifts and talents as part of what they have to contribute. School districts should foster projects like these by means of policy encouraging cooperation with community organizations.

Parental involvement should be sought. Schools should clarify for parents the nature of their child's gifts and talents, and what the school has to offer. Parents who deny a child's giftedness—or exaggerate it—may impede the child's development. A parent's desire to assuage conflicts between a child and non-gifted sibling may stifle talents unintentionally. The parent of a gifted child also may need help to strike a balance between the child's social and educational needs.

Parental choice must be recognized by the district, as well. Concerns for a child's social development may cause a parent to oppose special programs. This makes program options an even greater necessity and suggests a need for special information for parents that describes options and objectives. Schools should encourage teamwork and constructive involvement in meeting the gifted or talented child's needs.



Impact of Educational Reform

The educational reforms of the Regents Action Plan, like those in most other states, have focused upon measurability: required units of study, additional graduation requirements based on discrete subjects of study, and new tests. Acceleration is the only type of programming for the gifted and talented acknowledged in the Action Plan. Implementing regulations require that public schools permit acceleration in grade eight in at least four of eight designated subject areas. Something different is needed to produce a comprehensive program for the gifted and talented.

Differentiated curriculum that matches content or teaching methods to different skills and thinking capabilities is needed. Unfortunately, current tight schedules and overemphasis on academic competition as the sole route to success, discourage flexibility. The gifted and talented, like other students, need opportunities to explore interests not specifically included in the required curricula. Students must be permitted to apply talents in a variety of areas and to test their abilities. In addition to activities that teachers incorporate into the required curricula, electives and extracurricular activities provide a rich testing ground, as do summer enrichment programs such as the New York State Summer School of the Arts.

Those with giftedness in areas other than the academic may be shortchanged by the demands of their schedules. Greater flexibility, particularly during the middle grades transition period when talents often emerge, should be sought. School districts should be encouraged to seek innovative variances to Regents requirements. Reform, it must be remembered, should create and encourage new learning opportunities for all students, including the gifted and talented.

Legislative Considerations

Legislatively, the 1987-88 school year represented the beginning of the second decade for state aid for education of the gifted and talented (see Table I). In New York State, the Legislature first appropriated funds for the gifted and talented in 1977 by funding two pilot projects, for Brooklyn District 18 and Long Beach, at a cost of $125,000.

By 1981, there had been a 500 percent increase in the state appropriated funds for competitive grants. The time had arrived to establish an entitlement for all school districts. In 1982, the State Legislature adopted formula funding to school districts that decided to offer gifted and talented programs. Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982 also established an Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted Pupils to counsel with the education commissioner with respect to policies and procedures. There have been several formula modifications since the program's inception, but no substantial programmatic changes have been enacted.

The second decade should strengthen awareness in the educational community that the development of giftedness transcends all grade levels and should be nurtured in children from every background and circumstance. Potentially, this will benefit the entire educational program.

Additional funding is necessary for new programs or expansion of existing programs. There should be opportunity for districts to develop planning grants locally that include features of shared programming and combinations of local and regional arrangements. Funds also should be made available for technical assistance to districts, continued research, and data collection on programs and screening procedures.

The state's little-known Gifted Education Training System, which provides training and technical assistance to local school districts, should be recognized as an official network for information dissemination purposes. Comprised of coordinators from BOCES and the major cities, the network should be funded to expand its efforts in training teachers and pupil support staff, using the state's relatively well-known Special Education Resource and Training Center model.

In cities and regions where no coordinator of gifted and talented programs exists, a staff member should be designated to ensure coverage and encourage communication. Provisions should be sought to encourage the use of combinations of available aids for combinations of purpose—for example, to develop a program to identify at-risk gifted youth and provide an appropriate learning experience.

To further encourage equity, funding should support programs not only for identifiable, highly-gifted students, but also for enrichment opportunities across the spectrum of student needs and talents.

Funding and recognition of gifted and talented education programs provide incentives to local districts to develop excellent comprehensive education for gifted and talented students and in the process improve education for all students.

Therefore, any proposals for *regional residential* schools for excellence should be opposed! The commitment of state finances to residential schools would undermine local attempts, including those coordinated by BOCES, to develop, implement, evaluate, and refine programs. There is also a lack of information on the impact of *residential* schools on students.

Success of specialized high schools in New York City does not give support to the notion of residential schools for excellence. Those specialized schools do not remove students from their families and communities, nor do they create exorbitant costs compared to comprehensive high schools. The residential schools would do both.

Priorities and funding should remain focused on the development of innovative local programs, better understanding of how to identify and screen the gifted and talented, and appropriate training for all teachers so that the goals of equality as well as excellence for all students are served.

Constant attention should be paid to the gifted student who is disadvantaged or at risk of getting lost within the educational system.

Looking Ahead

Districts have found their programs for gifted and talented students, including staff training and concentration on critical thinking skills, will benefit students and staff district-wide. Multidisciplinary learning strategies and experiences that inspire creativity and self-esteem should not be reserved just for the gifted. By recognizing education of the gifted and talented as a necessary strand of a comprehensive educational program, school boards can realize and utilize more fully its benefits. Constant attention should be paid to the gifted student who is disadvantaged or at risk of getting lost within the educational system. Often, these students are prevented from recognizing and meeting their potential.

To understand giftedness, the nature of talent, and what gifted and talented students need educationally, there has to be a change in the view that each gifted and talented program must strive to produce a prize winner or world class artist. Far more significant is the chance to help a child see her or his own specialness. As John Gardner stated, "Our society cannot achieve greatness unless individuals at many levels of ability accept the need . . . to achieve. . . ."[17]

Students with special gifts and talents must *want* to pursue their potential and must be able to sense society's encouragement, as should all children. They also must want to share their gifts with the community.

To teach children to pursue life in a gifted way, with understanding, compassion, and confidence, is a goal well worthy of pursuit during the next decade.

Footnotes

1. Robin William's discussion of de Tocqueville in *American Society,* p. 438, emphasizes not only the conflict of these principles, but also the philosophical conflict between John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. As he states, "Both liberty and equality are . . . inseparable parts of western democratic tradition, but for all their affinity, their union has often posed perplexing dilemmas."
2. John Gardner, *Excellence: Can We Be Equal Too?* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1961), pp. 28-29.
3. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
4. During his work at the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, Dewey promoted a system which broke away from the traditional rote learning process to experiential learning that would allow students to rise to their individual potential. H. Warren Button and E. F. Provenzo; *History of Education and Culture in America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983), pp. 205-10.
5. *Identifying Gifted Students: Guidelines for School Districts* (Albany, NY: New York State Education Department, 1983), p. 5.
6. J. S. Renzulli, *The Three Ring Conception of Giftedness: A Developmental Model for Creative Productivity in Conceptions of Giftedness* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
7. G. A. Davis and S. B. Rimm, *Education of the Gifted and Talented* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), pp. 12-13.
8. In *Developing Talent in Young People,* Bloom describes the study, which "examined the processes by which individuals who have reached the highest levels of accomplishment in selected fields have been helped to develop their capabilities so fully. The subjects of our study included concert pianists, sculptors, research mathematicians, research neurologists, Olympic swimmers, and tennis champions."
9. Barbara Clark, *Growing Up Gifted: Developing the Potential of Children at Home and at School* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill & Co., 1983).
10. *Instructional Leadership Handbook* (Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals).
11. David and Rimm, op. cit., pp. 134-35.
12. Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983).
13. Clark, op. cit.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. *Widening Horizons: Using Community Resources in the Education of Gifted Students* (Albany, NY: NYS Education Department, 1985).
17. Gardner, op. cit.

Appendix A

Sample Policy 4322
Programs for the Gifted and Talented

The board encourages educational programs that promote the realization of individual potential in all students. Consistent with district efforts to develop a continuum of learning experiences that addresses the special gifts and talents of students, the superintendent, with input from appropriate school personnel, will develop a district plan for education of the gifted and talented. The superintendent will submit to the board a status report on an annual basis, which will include:

1. the criteria for pupil participation in programs;
2. status of ongoing programs;
3. recommendations for new programs;
4. the identification and allocation of resources for all ongoing and recommended programs;
5. provisions for staff development to promote effective implementation of programs; and
6. provisions for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of pupils and programs.

The board believes that programs traditionally viewed as for the gifted and talented greatly benefit the entire school program, and encourages programs that provide enrichment opportunities for all students. The board also recognizes the value of community support for program success and encourages the use of community resources for special programs, and the periodic reporting of activities.

The negotiable aspects of this policy will be adopted and implemented in conformity with the Taylor Law and agreements negotiated with the individual bargaining units representing staff.

Ref: Education Law Sections 4451, 4452

Cross-Ref: 9280, Professional Staff Development
1000, Community Relations Goals

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